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SUBJECT: SHANGHAI CHINA CONFERENCE A PRELUDE TO 6TH PLENUM

REF: A) SHANGHAI 6459; B) SHANGHAI 3843; C) SHANGHAI 155; D) SHANGHAI 3844

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CLASSIFIED BY: Simon Schuchat , DPO, U.S. Consulate, Shanghai,
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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C). Summary. During an international conference of China Studies, top Chinese scholars discussed China's political development and foreign policy, in a prelude to discussions at the October 2006 Plenum and even the 2007 Party Congress. Chinese scholars characterized China as committed to the concepts of "Peaceful Development," "Peaceful Rise," and a "Harmonious World." They also noted that Chinese economic development was intertwined with political reform, that China was promoting its own style of "consultative democracy," and would not adopt Western-style democracy. End Summary

An Authoritative Prelude to the Plenum for Foreign Scholars

¶2. (C) From September 20-22, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) hosted the Second World Forum on China Studies, with the theme "China and the World: Harmony and Peace." The timing of the conference and the constant barrage of propaganda left little doubt in the minds of many conference attendees that the meetings were meant to showcase and explain to the foreign scholarly community party doctrines that would be discussed at the upcoming Plenum. As Fudan Public Affairs School Researcher and conference attendee Hu Xiaoxiu said, there was no mistaking that the conference theme was related to the Plenum (which in fact showcased the concept of a "socialist harmonious society") and President Hu's continued stress of the "Harmony" theme in the run up to next year's 17th Party Congress.

¶3. (C) Underscoring the importance of the conference was the fact that both senior foreign policy advisor and China Forum on Reform and Opening Up President Zheng Bijian and Central Party

School (CPS) Vice President Li Junru delivered remarks at the conference. Zheng developed the "China's Peaceful Rise" and "Harmonious World" concepts (Ref A). Li is China's leading expert on "consultative democracy" and a close advisor to both Vice President Zeng Qinghong and, more recently, President Hu Jintao, according to George Washington University Professor David Shambaugh who also attended the conference. The CPS was a silent co-sponsor, further highlighting the conference's importance in the run up to the Plenum. Although there were no outward signs indicating CPS involvement, CPS Politics and Law Professor Liu Yongyan told Poloff that the CPS had selected the conference theme and helped SASS pull together the invitees name list.

Zheng Bijian: China Seeks for Peace and a Harmonious World

¶4. (U) In his opening speech to the conference, Professor Zheng stressed that China's development had been and would remain peaceful. China insisted on peaceful development, refused to seek hegemony, and was looking for "cooperative development," explaining that this was "China's Road" to building a "harmonious, civilized, and democratic society." Zheng explained that China's road toward peaceful development had five elements:

-- China's development stage would last 70 years, from the end of the 1970s to the middle of the 21st Century.

-- During this 70 year period, China would be focused on

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resolving the questions of the right to exist, the right to develop, and the right to education. China was busy with its domestic issues and had no time, energy, or need to threaten others. Of course, Zheng added, even after it was developed, China would continue in its peaceful ways.

-- China would stress self-reliance, developing its internal market, promoting domestic science and technology development, rejuvenating Chinese culture, and transforming and increasing its industrial capacity, even while globalizing its economy and striving for "win-win" international relations.

-- China would strive for harmony at home and peace abroad through its international commitments and domestic covenants.

-- Finally, over the next 50 years, China would seek to restore Chinese civilization through an unceasing spirit of rejuvenation.

¶5. (U) Zheng elaborated on the "Chinese Dream," which, he said, determined China's path of peaceful development. The Chinese people deeply understood the evils of rule by force and the value of peace. To that end, China sought first to protect its national sovereignty and maintain its territorial integrity. Second, China sought to realize national development and modernization through peaceful and civilized means. "China's Road" and the "Chinese Dream" led to what Zheng referred to as the "Chinese Heart," which was 1.3 to 1.5 billion Chinese people

actively establishing a "harmonious China" while simultaneously seeking the establishment of a "harmonious world". Developing a "harmonious world", Zheng said, was a precondition for China's peaceful development (Ref A).

Li Junru: Political Reform Is And Has Been Underway

¶6. (U) In his address to the conference, CPS Vice President Li Junru said that there was a "big misunderstanding" that China's reforms had only been economic and that China had avoided political reforms. In fact, there were at least eight areas on which the Party had focused over the past 20 plus years as it implemented political structural reform.

-- The use of economic reform to promote reform of the political system.

-- Combining democracy with the legal system, stressing that democracy needed to be institutionalized and legalized.

-- Combining reform of the political system with improvement of people's lives, to ensure that the people benefited directly from political reforms.

-- Building grassroots self governance and thereby strengthening the rule of law nationwide. (Li cited the establishment of village, and neighborhood committees, professional representation conferences, and direct village elections in the countryside as examples of grassroots self governance initiatives.)

-- Improving the "political and party system with Chinese characteristics" by allowing other parties to participate

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lawfully with the ruling party.

-- Strengthening inner-party democracy to promote "people's democracy." Li said that along these lines, the Party had abolished the life-long tenure system, creating job opportunities for capable people through fair competition.

-- Combining legal supervision and administrative supervision with direct supervision by the people and improving the public supervisory and letters and visits systems (Ref B). Li said that the media's participation in the supervisory system had also been instrumental in China's democratic development.

-- Finally, combining election-based democracy with consultative democracy and improving people's "orderly participation" in politics.

¶7. (U) During a panel entitled "The Goals and Trends of Contemporary Political Development," CPS Professor Liu Yongyan asserted that China had democracy, based on the work of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), an appointed body whose job it was to understand grassroots issues and recommend solutions and policy adjustments (Ref C). According to SASS Deng Xiaoping Theory Institute researcher Cheng Weili, the CPPCC was instrumental in helping subordinate the individual interests of the various parties to the overall national interest. Cheng explained that a consultative democracy required equal status for all participants, free and open discussion, the right to criticize others' opinions, and consensus to be reached after negotiations and consultations. This kind of democracy emphasized procedure and equality before the law, including leaders of the ruling party. Cheng, himself a CPPCC member, noted that some within the Party who wanted to "avoid" democracy. Those Party members failed to understand that "without the consultative democratic system, there could be no Socialism in China," according to Cheng.

¶8. (U) Liu argued that there were many different types of democracies and all were legitimate. Although China was committed to reform of its People's Congress system, it would not copy Western democratic practices, since those practices did not conform to China's reality. Li Junru then chided some Chinese scholars for always clamoring for Western-style multi-party democracy, adding that it was ludicrous to presume China could adopt another country's system. Li joked that the population of all the developed countries combined was 1.3 billion; when they could all get together and elect a president, then China could do so too.

¶9. (U) According to Chinese scholar Jia Jianfang, to safeguard China's political system, China needed to focus on building a "Harmonious Society." He explained that past economic reforms had produced growing societal conflicts in China arising from corruption, uneven distribution of income, and unbalanced development. Jia said that the "Harmonious Society" concept was aimed at resolving these conflicts by establishing harmony between people, between people and society, and between people and nature. To achieve a "Harmonious Society," the Party needed a "human based approach" that utilized Scientific Development to balance regional disparities and address the rural/urban divide.

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Such a society needed to be constructed on the basis of equality and the rule of law, requiring transparency, elections, public participation, and protection of human rights, according to Jia. He also said that societal "harmony" required a society to have a shared set of values and applauded Hu's proposed Socialist concept of the "The Eight Honors and Eight Shames" for inculcating such values (Ref D).

¶10. (U) Central Party School researcher Dai Yanjun explained the importance of ideology for any country and the specific ideological work China faced. Dai claimed that a ruling party could not remain in power if its ideas were not in harmony with the people. If, however, the ruling party's ideology correctly represented the interests of the majority, the ruling party could do its job well. The CCP, Dai said, was facing new challenges regarding its ideological work:

-- competing ideologies seeping in from the outside world;

-- the shift toward a market economy from its traditional socialist planned economy;

-- social disparities and conflicts arising from reforms;

-- and a freer flow of information due to the development of information technology.

¶11. (C) To face these challenges, the Party needed to adapt. It needed to better understand the needs of the new classes that were emerging as a result of reforms and be applicable to every person in every condition. It needed to be practical, easily understood, and widely disseminated. To that end, propaganda officials needed to better understand the Internet in order to expand the Party's influence online and control the guidance of web pages. (Comment: We took the subtext of Dai's speech to be the claim that in order to remain relevant, the Party needed a new ideology that truly reflected the needs of the people, such as the "putting people first" mantra of Hu's Harmonious Society. End comment.)

China's Peaceful Place in the World

¶12. (SBU) During a panel on "China's Peaceful Development and the International System" Renmin University International Relations School Professor Jin Canrong claimed that the Chinese government had struck the term "rise" from its vocabulary, noting that China would stick to "peaceful development." (Note: Although the government had struck "rise" from its vocabulary, scholars, including those at the conference, continued to use it. See Ref A. End note.) China was still a developing country, according to Jin, not a "superpower" as some Western academics believed. Peking Normal University History Professor Zhang Hongyi argued that China was "not capable" of aggression and was dedicated to peace. China would be able to make a positive contribution to the world if it was able to rise peacefully, but to do so China first had to solve its internal problems. Chinese Academy of Social Sciences History Professor Cai Penghong added that the Chinese government's position was that China was an active participant and actor in the international system. China's rise was impacting the world

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order. Although the United States was still dominant, it had benefited from China's growth. Cai said that China was seeking a "win-win situation" and opined that there should not be one single country that takes the lead on everything.

Comment: Ignore the Man Behind the Curtain!

¶13. (C) The Party devoted a lot of resources towards trying to convince the international scholarly community that it was an internationally benign democratic dictatorship focused on making life better and "harmonious" for its people and the world.

Chinese scholars' claims that China's gradual rise since the beginning of the reform era has been peaceful, and that the PRC was incapable of aggression, however, appeared to turn a blind eye towards its history of violent border conflicts, not to mention continued internal repression of its own population.

Moreover, scholarly insistence that China had its own form of democracy and that Western-style democracy was simply not suited for China appeared to us a mere rationale for continued CCP rule. However, calls for greater transparency, public participation, and strengthening of the People's Congress system suggest the direction that some, at least, within the Party hope to take.

¶14. (C) It is difficult to assess the personal commitment of the scholars at the conference to the Party line which they were spouting. Some, no doubt, fully believe what they say. But others may not. For instance, on October 6, Wenling City Deputy Propaganda Chief Chen Yiming (protect) who is formulating grassroots democratic reforms in Zhejiang Province, told Poloff that CPS Vice President Li--whom Chen has interacted with in the past--was actually supportive of genuine Western-style democratic reform, but was unable to discuss such things publicly. In an aside, CPS Professor Liu also confided to Poloff that she admired U.S. democracy and had studied the works of the American founding fathers. End comment.

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